

Milella, Domingo. "Archaic and contemporary," *Domus*, London, 4 December 2012.

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## Archaic and contemporary

Italian photographer Domingo Milella's first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom showcases images of important ancient sites in the Mediterranean, capturing remnants of power, culture, life and death. A photo-essay from London by Domingo Milella

Domingo Milella's new solo exhibition at [Brancolini Grimaldi](#), in London, features images of important ancient sites in the Mediterranean, capturing remnants of power, culture, life and death. Over the last ten years, Milella's subjects have been cities and their borders, cemeteries and villages, caves and homes, tombs and hieroglyphs — in short, signs of man's presence on earth. His interest lies in the overlap between civilization and nature and how landscape and architecture are invested with individual and collective memory.

In the ancient Turkish city of Myra, Milella has photographed spectacular tombs that are carved into stone cliffs, as if they were part of the mountain. Another image depicts a sanctuary in Phrygia, a lime stone formation filled with ancient holes, shaped by both natural and human interaction. A place of refuge, of spiritual purpose and sacrifice, the sanctuary encapsulates Milella's enquiry into an identity which is simultaneously archaic and contemporary.

The fallen ruins of the Greco-Roman theatre of Termessos stand at 1600 metres above sea level and almost appears to be part of and contained by the Taurus mountains that surround them. They have endured over two thousand years of elemental weathering, frozen in time on the day the city was abandoned. The idea of durability and the passage of time on

### Section

Photo-essays

### Author

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### Photography

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### Published

04 Dec 2012

### Keywords

ancient civilisations , Brancolini Grimaldi , built environment , Exhibition , history , Mediterranean , Photography , Power , Turkey

### Location

London

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language and culture are also present in the image of the cemetery at Van, a city on the border between Turkey and Iran. Muslim graves stand in a snowy field. Their height and dark, monolithic presence make them appear like the skyline of a modern city. Inscribed with Selgiuchid writings, the graves are an architectural model of time, of memory and of survival.



↑ Top: Domingo Milella, *Myra, Turkey 2012*, Courtesy Brancolini Grimaldi. Above: Domingo Milella, *Acitrezza, Italy 2008*, Courtesy Brancolini Grimaldi

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The hieroglyphs of Hattusas date from 1200 BC and tell the story of military glory of the last Hittite emperor. Milella's image reflects on the physical achievement of carving a rock with language, but also on a message that has survived thousands of years, whose meaning is almost lost, but which has survived the collapse of empires, nations, culture and languages. In an image taken in Cavustepe in the Neoassiro area of now modern Kurdistan, cuneiform writing — the first form of writing invented by humankind — is inscribed in granite, still intact despite being exposed to the elements.

For Milella, "making images doesn't only mean documenting or taking photographs. It's also a possibility for contemplation and recollection. Building an image of the past is to face the present, and activate the possibility of the future." The photographer has documented modern

apartment blocks, bunkers left from the Second World War and industrial waste lay alongside olive fields, crumbling churches and the wild Adriatic Sea. Originally from Bari, the city is a continuous subject for Milella, who has also made work in Mexico City, Cairo, Ankara, Anatolia, Sicily, Tunisia, Mesopotamia and Turkey.



←  
One of Domingo Milella's images. Courtesy  
Brancolini Grimaldi

Through 26 January 2013  
**Domingo Milella**  
**Brancolini Grimaldi**  
43-44 Albemarle Street, London